



**Cardinal Joseph William Tobin, C.S.S.R.**  
**By the Grace of God and the Favor of the Apostolic See**  
**Archbishop of Newark**

## **“GIFTED TO GIVE”**

**The 500th Anniversary of the Arrival of the Gospel in the Philippines**

Spring 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with joy that I greet the Filipino clergy and faithful of the Archdiocese of Newark as they celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the arrival of the Gospel in the Philippines. Together with them, the Archdiocese recalls with gratitude the providential landing of Ferdinand Magellan on one of their more than seven thousand islands in 1521. The first Mass was celebrated on the islands by Fray Pedro de Valderrama, OSA, on Easter Sunday, March 31, 1521.

For 500 years, the Philippines has treasured the gift of its Catholic faith. The seeds of faith were planted by Spanish missionaries and quickly took root in the hearts of Filipinos, which are naturally disposed to the divine. The same faith sustains most Filipinos to this day, making the Philippines the largest Catholic country in Asia. It is the faith, centered on the Eucharist, that makes them grateful for their daily bread, welcoming as they are welcomed to the Eucharistic banquet, joyful to break open the Word with others, and willing to be broken themselves for the sake of the Gospel.

This jubilee year recognizes gratefully the missionaries who brought the faith to the Philippines, the ancestors who accepted the faith and passed it on, generation after generation, the bishops, priests, religious, and lay ministers who have been at the vanguard of the Filipinos' spiritual journey.

*Gifted to Give* is the theme of the 500th Anniversary Celebration. This focus aims to renew the call to the mission of all the baptized and draws its inspiration from the command of Jesus to his disciples: “What you have received as a gift, give as a gift” (Mt 10:8).

In his homily at the Mass he celebrated for and with Filipinos at St. Peter's Basilica on March 14, 2021, Pope Francis said:

Wherever they (Filipinos) go to work, they sow the faith. It is part of your genes, a blessed "infectiousness" that I urge you to preserve. Keep bringing the faith, the good news you received five hundred years ago, to others. I want to thank you, then, for the joy you bring to the whole world and to our Christian communities, where your discreet and hardworking presence became a testimony of faith. In the footsteps of Mary and Joseph, for God loves to bring the joy of faith through humble, hidden, courageous and persevering service."

Today, millions of Filipino migrants present in some 200 countries share the gift of faith they have received. In their new homes, Filipinos faithfully live their Christian faith, often in unassuming and unheralded ways. They preach the Gospel by their actions. In parishes and communities, they take an active part in worship while serving as members of the choir, readers, Eucharistic ministers, catechists, and volunteers in so many parish activities. They enrich their parishes with a rich array of beautiful cultural and religious traditions. In countries where the practice of the Christian faith is difficult, even dangerous, I have witnessed courageous Filipino Catholics who find ways to come together and worship.

Our Archdiocese is blessed with thousands of Filipino lay faithful who actively participate in the life of the Church. Another blessing is the service of 46 Filipino priests who labor in parishes and other ministries.

The Filipino clergy of the Archdiocese of Newark will be leading the celebrations throughout the year to mark this significant milestone. Masses will be celebrated to commemorate various significant events in Philippine history. A replica of the Magellan Cross, along with the images of Santo Nino and Our Lady of Manaoag, will journey on a pilgrimage to 12 Jubilee Churches in the archdiocese and the Diocese of Paterson. I invite everyone, especially our Filipino faithful, to participate fully in these celebrations. Attached is the Program of Activities of the 500th Anniversary of the Arrival of the gospel in the Philippines.

*Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!* May the Lord, who has gifted us with faith, grant us generous hearts that will share the same faith to others! May our Mother of Perpetual Help watch over your families and communities!

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph W. Tobin" with a stylized flourish at the end.

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Archbishop of Newark

Attachment